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ABSTRACT

The comprehensive colleges and universities--often former normal schools that have grown quickly in recent years--are seen to be affected primarily by declining financial resources, declining enrollment, and competition, now and in the near future. Financial resources are affected by higher priority placed on other state budget items: tax limitation movements, retirement and disability programs claiming more funds, declining return on endowments, and inflation. Concurrently, there is pressure to serve new populations without adequate compensation for added costs. Enrollment of traditional students is declining, but nontraditional students are being actively recruited. Although this may help enrollment rates, it may also contribute to a lowering of academic standards. Competition is seen to come from "degree mills," colleges with low standards, and accredited private colleges and universities. Collective bargaining and tenure may affect staffing patterns. It is felt that the challenge of the comprehensive colleges and universities is finding new opportunities to employ resources at hand to best serve the higher education community. They may do this in part by lobbying to change public policy and by minimizing competition. (MSE)

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THE FUTURE OF COMPREHENSIVE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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The Institutions and Activities of Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive colleges and universities filled the major educational needs in the 1960's of training students to become teachers in the public school system (K-12 grades) and to acquire proficiency in other skilled occupations functioning in our economic system.

The vast demand for these types of training and the adequacy in which the colleges and universities satisfied that demand, resulted in an accelerated rate of growth in their enrollment during this time period.

It is obvious then, that a reversal of this demand for teachers and the overall decline in the job market, as currently being experienced and projected for the future, will cause a deceleration in the rate of growth in enrollment and result in very serious retrenchment problems for the comprehensive colleges and universities.

According to Breneman (1979), the most troubled group within higher education in the 1980's will be the former teacher colleges that began to develop into comprehensive state universities in the 1960's and that now find themselves stranded in a state of semi-development and uncertain mission. These institutions will not develop into major research universities with-

in our lifetimes, and are likely to bear much of the enrollment loss within the public sector.

In this second paper, I will indicate how the major factors described in the first paper and included as an attachment to this paper, specifically affect the comprehensive colleges and universities; how the added factor of quality education will influence the future of institutions of higher education; and finally, give my assessment of the future role that comprehensive colleges and universities will play in the higher education system.

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING HIGHER EDUCATION ON THE COMPREHENSIVE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

1. Financial Resources

Like the other sectors of higher education, during the 1960's, the predominant theme of comprehensive colleges and universities was quantitative growth - development of new programs and services and physical expansion of facilities to serve a rapidly expanding student clientele. Comprehensive colleges and universities gained credibility as training institutions for teachers and many other skilled occupations in our economy. Resources were plentiful, and staff were added in unprecedented numbers to build new programs or improve existing ones. The size of the budget was not a critical issue since unallocated funds were always available to support a new program or to cover an unanticipated situation. As a result, comprehensive colleges and universities' faculty and administrators came to believe that all emerging needs could be met by constantly expanding financial resources.

The principal deficiency of leadership in the comprehensive colleges and universities, during this period, was failure to ask for more money or hesitation in expanding into new areas or creating a new college or establishing another campus. Any leader concerned with protecting fundamental and proven values in the

face of such financial incentives was said to lack imagination. The means were at hand to pursue every aspiration, and many a scholarly academic senate began to act like a local chamber of commerce (Ashworth, 1979).

Beginning in the late 1970's and extending into the immediate future, the comprehensive colleges and universities have experienced a drastic change in this financial environment, This change in direction is attributable to the combination of tax limitation movements coupled with other higher priority competing claims on public expenditures.

Since the school population is declining as a percentage of the population, and the retired group is growing both absolutely and proportionately, more of the federal budget is being directed to the retirement and disability programs. Education enjoys the honor of being the largest single component of most state budgets; however, the general condition of the economy and the increasing resistance of the taxpayers to increase taxation will result in either future reduced or "no-growth" apportionations to education.

In addition, the return on endowments is declining drastically and may virtually disappear as a source of income (Scully, 1980).

Further, inflation is raising the cost of providing a higher education more than other costs rise because there is a no-gain in

productivity, as there is in most other sectors of society, to help offset these higher costs (Scully, 1980).

All of these economic factors are occurring concurrent with public pressures through government to open doors to students previously denied access, to expand and add programs and degrees, and to correct social inequities. These students, known as the "non-traditional" students", are normally more expensive to educate, since they require remedial courses to help them reach a satisfactory level of performance, and a support system to help them maintain that performance and complete their degree requirements.

Because the funding formula that is used to determine the allocation of educational resources does not consider these added costs, the comprehensive colleges and universities are in the increasingly difficult position of having to provide increased support services for students with a stable or diminishing pool of staff and material resources.

In view of these declining enrollments and because of the reduction of the demand for teachers, the comprehensive colleges and universities are now faced with the task of trying to explain why they should be maintained in their present expanded form. They are trying to convince the public that the benefits of continued high le-

vels of investment in higher education exceed the costs. They are applying every approach they can contrive in order to survive this decade which promises decline in enrollment, decline in income and increase in costs.

It seems unfair, but the educators' reward for having been responsive to the needs of the 1960's is to have to stand accountable: They must explain their institutions as they now are and justify what they are doing and why it costs so much.

Comprehensive colleges and universities' administrators must continue to point out that the situation that they now find themselves in is in large part the result of government financial enticements coupled with the desire to be responsive to social needs. They must continue to seek increased support from government on the basis of its contribution to the dilemma in which higher education finds itself, while resisting the continued thrust of government to increase its control over higher education.

As stated in More Than Survival, control by federal and state governments continue to advance like a new ice age. Realization of the seeming inevitability of this advance, rather than its sudden occurrence, will constitute the shock, if indeed the glacial spread cannot be halted.

More Than Survival suggests that this situation can best be controlled

by the distribution of federal, and also state funds, where reasonably possible, from several sources and through the support of individual projects and individual students. Reliance on several sources of funding, and on students and panels of experts as "markets" should reduce the likelihood of detailed governmental controls and of political interference, it opens up the possibility of more dynamic adjustments, it reduces the need for advance agreement on specific objectives, and it gives greater scope to individual preferences.

I might add that providing financial aid directly to the student will increase the competition that comprehensive colleges and universities will experience from private institutions of higher education. The impact of this situation is discussed in a future section of this paper.

2. Enrollment

a. Traditional Role

The type of institution which evolved out of the normal school, later the teachers' college, and now the comprehensive college, has always had a primary commitment to teaching for the undergraduate student, with a continuing emphasis on the preparation of teachers. Research and service were, at best, only peripheral activities engaged in by the more intellectual or ambitious of their professors. Technical or occupational education, aside from business, has become a major function of only a few of them. State funds are gene-

rally furnished only for teaching purposes. With the diminishing demand for teachers, the comprehensive colleges have lost their paramount purpose. This is so even though the comprehensive colleges are regarded by the public as better teaching institutions than are the research universities.

The decline in the demand for teachers will cause enrollments to fall because the number of unemployed former college students trained as teachers is discouraging to the prospective college students. Scully (1980) indicated that some forecasters felt that the combination of a smaller 18-21 age cohort and reduced prospects for college graduates in the labor market may cause enrollments to decline by 40 or even 50 per cent.

Being an enterprise where the money follows the student, through tuition or state funding, comprehensive colleges and universities will be pressed to maintain their share of the enrollments and thus, their share of the dollars. Competition will become very keen, and new activities described as non-traditional and innovative will have to be started in order to attract and hold students. The colleges and universities will be in the body-count game until at least the mid-1980's, and each one must find enough students in the intervening years to survive until then (Ashworth, 1979).

b. Non-Traditional Role

To offset this projected enrollment decline, the comprehensive

colleges and universities have established a non-traditional role - a new marketing strategy to attract the non-traditional students to enroll in their institutions.

1) Lower Admission Standards

By making it easier for students to enter, institutions of higher education can reach out to a new clientele not previously eligible for admission. The community colleges, which have always been open-door institutions, are finding that the senior colleges and universities are competing for some of the students heretofore exclusively within their domain, offering remedial and compensatory courses, and requesting state support for them.

2) Lower Performance Standards

Lowering admissions standards for students only to flunk the students out promptly does not help increase enrollment. Therefore, performance standards within the colleges will have to be lowered in order to keep more students in college. According to Ashworth (1979), it is much easier to graduate from college now than it was a decade or two ago. The earlier problems of high attrition rates have been handled in part by grade inflation and the reduction of the performance standards imposed on students.

3) Active Recruitment Programs

This involves aggressive market programs directed at high school and community college graduates. In addition, it includes

the pirating of students from other institutions.

4) Teaching Off-Campus Courses

The most actively pursued approach to increasing enrollment is the teaching of courses and programs at locations remote from the parent institution. Some schools have dozens of such centers, located hundreds or even thousands of miles from the home campus.

The real motivation behind much off-campus teaching is that such courses offered by public colleges and universities are financed by state governments at the same rates they would be if taught on the main campus. This results in a profit on such courses, which can be used on the home campus.

The external degree, as stated by Glenny (1973), which consist of the university without walls, the videotape cassette, and closed-circuit TV will have major influences on how both adults and college-age youth obtain education and training in the future. Certainly, many students now opting for the short technical program for job-entry training will later wish to be retrained or to take courses in the liberal arts and in general education. But to do so they probably will not need, and may not desire, to attend a traditional college or university, or a proprietary school.

The success of this new strategy can have both a negative and

positive outcomes. The negative outcomes could result from the lowering of admissions and performance standards which could have a devaluation effect on the worth of the baccalaureate degree. The positive outcome could be the survival of the comprehensive colleges and universities. The results of these outcomes must be analyzed to determine the future direction of the comprehensive colleges and universities.

3. The Impact of Competition on Comprehensive Colleges and Universities

At the same time that the public has recognized the benefits of a college degree and the federal government has discovered the need to make one or more degrees available to as many citizens as possible, individuals have found that there is money to be made in the field of higher education. Anything with an important social value can become a marketable item. The entrepreneurs have been attracted to the field of higher learning.

a. Diploma Mills

Diploma mills have long been a problem in higher education. For prices ranging from ten dollars to several hundred dollars, degrees can be ordered by mail. Operations dispensing such diplomas make no pretense to provide an education. They only sell the paper credentials and advertise in newspapers and some magazines.

The federal government tries to regulate such businesses when

they involve mail fraud. The state usually deals with diploma mills more generally by passing legislation subjecting them to educational standards they cannot meet.

b. Misguided Little Schools

One step removed from the diploma mills is another group of schools undeserving to be classified as postsecondary institutions. But the one step removed is an important one. Some of these schools have existed for years; others are new and often dedicated to serving a small and special-interest clientele. In either case, the leaders of most of these schools are not profit motivated promoters. They sincerely believe they are offering adequate education to award bachelor's, master's, and even doctoral degrees. They simply do not recognize what constitutes minimum standards for college-level education.

c. The Accredited Private Colleges and Universities

It is suggested in More Than Survival that the diversity of American higher education is universally regarded as one of its main sources of strength, reflecting the pluralism in the larger society. Further, it is suggested that private higher education which is being threatened by declining enrollment and increased tuition need to be strengthened. This could be done in part in reducing the funds appropriated for the Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grant program and reallocating the amounts saved to the State Student Incentive Grants Program (SSIG).

Appropriations for the SSIG program need to be increased in the 1980's so that federal-state funds are adequate to provide full tuition grants to students from families in the lowest income quartile and one-half of tuition, on the average, to students from families in the next-to-lowest income quartile. If this recommendation is adopted, then the private colleges and universities would be able to compete more favorably with the comprehensive colleges and universities. As a consequence, the latter may expect to lose students to the former in the growing competition to maintain a constant or increasing enrollment.

4. Collective Bargaining at the Comprehensive Colleges and Universities

Collective bargaining is now spreading rapidly, although its future course is quite unclear. It now covers about 15 per cent of the professiorate, mostly in the community colleges and in the comprehensive colleges and universities. It can come, when it does, as a supplement to current forms of governance, if it is confined to bargaining over matters of compensation; or it can be a totally new form of governance, as in the Boston State contract, covering all decision-making processes. Half or more of faculty members, according to the Carnegie Commission Report of 1973, now favor collective bargaining, and also favor greater militancy in asserting faculty interests.

The 1980's may belong to faculty activism as the 1960's did to student activism.

The 1980's will be a difficult time to consider curricular change, for a shifting pattern of enrollments will threaten faculty members, who will oppose change for the good and understandable reasons of self-interest. There is no recourse here but to meet the issue head-on, linking curricular change to staffing patterns as part of the planning process. At least, in this way, decisions can be addressed honestly and on their merit, rather than having educational policy determined ostensibly on educational grounds, but in reality, for reasons of job protection (Breneman, 1979).

5. The Tenure of Faculty Members

As with the community colleges, the rising tenure ratios within community colleges and their tightening budgets will restrict the ability of comprehensive colleges and universities to address the needs of the students they serve.

6. Quality Education

The struggle for survival of the comprehensive colleges and universities has led to the lowering of admission requirements; the increased emphasis on retention of students, sometimes regardless of their performance; and the rising level of grades to attract and retain students in courses and departments.

Ashworth (1979) summed up the problem succinctly when he said:

> "On the one hand (higher education) is too valuable to be restricted to the elite; on the other hand, it is too important to have its standards bartered away by those who are more interested in selling credentials than knowledge".

The principal responsibility for quality control lies with the colleges and universities. No other social organization, no government agency or business enterprise can acquire the credibility or prestige that faculty members carry in assessing quality in academic programs. There is no one else to do the job. But if the universities do not do the job, someone else will seek to be designated to do it.

The recognized spokesmen for quality in higher education are the accrediting associations since they draw upon faculty members and college administrators to conduct evaluations of programs and schools. Under the American federal system, responsiblity for education is left to the states. However, since the various states could not impose uniform higher-education standards among all states, voluntary accrediting associations came into being, covering the different regions of the country, to police and assist the colleges and universities in meeting minimum standards. The decisions of these associations have been accepted by society because they are based primarily upon assessments made by faculty members and administrators, those individuals in society who are best qualified to evaluate their peers and their mimics.

In the end, in any case. whether controls over quality are tightened or not will depend upon the expectations and desires of the consumers. When students and parents learn that the value of the degrees they invested in is not what they thought it was, and be-

gin to seek restitution. When employers who hire graduates of inadequate programs and who find that they cannot perform, become disenchanted. When enough segments of society become displeased with such programs, the educators will be expected to correct the situation. If the educators do not, legislators will confront the problem. And educators should have learned long ago that it is always risky to wait for lawmakers or the courts to resolve problems in education. Whether faculties and administrators of colleges and universities will take the initiative in addressing this problem remains to be seen.

III. THE FUTURE OF COMPREHENSIVE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The comprehensive colleges and universities have spent twenty years responding to public pressures through government to grow, to open their doors to students previously denied access, to expand and add programs and degrees, to construct new buildings and campuses, and to correct social inequities. Now the prospect of no growth or even decline in enrollments and income as a result of the reduced demand for teachers and other skilled professionals is leading to a period of retrenchment.

The challenge of comprehensive college and university administrators, during this period, is to find new opportunities - new ways to employ the resources at hand to best serve the needs of the higher education community.

The Radner-Miller study describes one way in which potentially one million additional teachers could be utilized by 1987. The study contends that further progress in increasing equality of educational opportunity at the level of higher education probably requires an increase in academic achievement at the primary and secondary levels. Their analysis of one method of dealing with low achievement in elementary and secondary schools - substantially increasing the faculty-to-students ratio in selected schools - produces some interesting results. They show that it is probable that an increase in the faculty-to-students ratio (for "disadvantaged" students only) from the present level of 1-to-25 to a target

level of 1-to-6 would appreciably improve the academic performance of the students.

This study illustrates that the state should examine the possibilities of adding teaching capacity in such areas as inner city and rural schools, preschool programs, schools for dual-language students, and classes for handicapped students.

This study further suggests that public policies that will provide more teachers and related facilities in carefully selected areas can greatly benefit many American youths. (More Than Survival)

Thus, if such policies could be implemented, the surplus of teachers that exist in some areas could be shifted to cover deficits that would definitely exist in the above listed areas.

It is the responsibility of comprehensive college and university administrators to lobby the federal and state governments to implement such public policies so that both the educational needs of the community and the survival needs of the colleges and universities might be met.

It is unlikely that the role of the comprehensive college and university will be substantially altered. The supply of educated talent may be in surplus, but the need for educated talent has not ended. Comprehensive colleges and universities must pursue other missions

not directly related to the teaching and other skilled professions. They must play a major role in the fostering, encouraging and cultivating of the performing arts, the visual arts, and the intellectual exploration of past cultural accomplishments.

Even though it will be difficult, the administrators must sell this concept to the state legislature so that adequate funding can be obtained.

Finally, the comprehensive colleges and universities must stop competing against one another for federal, state and private money as well as for students and faculty and develop consortia for strengthening academic programs, improving administration, and providing for varying special needs.

Consortia can encourage library and instructional material exchanges. Some consortia have been set up for the sole purpose of library exchange. The Association Colleges of the Midwest is an example of such a consortium for a library and periodical exchange program.

Consortia can have programs of cross-registration. This process allows a student to be enrolled concurrently on two or more campuses although the fees and administrative details are handled by his/her home campus. Examples of this type of cooperation can be observed at the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Met-

ropolitan Area or the San Francisco Consortium on Higher Education and Urban Affairs.

Consortia can be used to capitalize on the use of technological teaching and/or learning media. The Association for Graduate Education and Research of North Texas provides an example of a successful television teaching situation. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education has given all higher education a model to pursue in the effective, cooperative use of computers.

More Than Survival states best in the following paragraph the concept that the consortia are trying to develop:

> "The nation has never needed the contribution of higher education more than it does today; yet higher education has never faced the prospect of so much unused capacity. This is a painful paradox - useful capacity not fully used. Fortunately, the consortium model is a common-sense solution to this problem."

The redirection of the teacher training resources to associated fields; the reestablishment of the comprehensive colleges and universities as the storehouse of our culture; and the innovative approaches to sharing and combining resources through the establishment of consortia are all major steps that can be taken to strengthen the role of comprehensive colleges and universities in our society. However, unless the problem of the decline in the quality of education is aggressively pursued, the legitimacy and thus the survival of the comprehensive colleges and universities will be in jeopardy. The principal expression of this concern is being illustrated today in how poorly prepared many new degree recipients are and how badly many of them perform on state

and national test and licensure examinations.

Until this problem is resolved, it will become progressively more difficult to obtain adequate financial support from the federal and state governments because the business community will increasingly establish their own postsecondary institutions within their firms, and, having incurred these costs of education, they will be less generous with donations to colleges and universities and will begin to complain about the taxes going into a system of higher education that has become a useless appendage of society.

Dreneman best describes the role of comprehensive colleges of the future in the following:

> "In its relation with the wider community in the 1980's, (comprehensive colleges) must walk the fine line between responsible innovation and expedient hucksterism. Trustees and administrators must be willing to pare back institutions rather than undertake any activity whatsoever if it adds to enrollment. The next decade will be difficult for everyone whose career is entwined with higher education, but leaders must be found who will take the long view of community relations. Higher education is costly, and promises to grow more so; it is the responsibility of all (in higher education) to make sure that what (they) offer is worth what it costs."

V. SUMMARY

The comprehensive colleges and universities must plan to function in a "steady-state" growth environment.

The high cost of education, and the promise that it will grow even more, place a great responsibility on the administrators, the trustees, and the faculties to make sure that the quality of education offered is worth what it costs.

In conclusion, the comprehensive colleges and universities' ability to redirect their teacher training experience into associated fields; the possibility of resource sharing through consortia; and my belief that their credibility will be restored through significant increases in the quality level of higher education, make them the sector of higher education with a better than average chance for survival over the next 20 years.

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